

“Going Down the Road...”
Overcoming Adversity with Positive Outcomes
By Jill Matlow, Wall Street Dead aHead Family Member



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

I was recently reminded of those great lyrics by Nancy Sinatra: *“These boots are made for walking, and that’s just what they’ll do”* when I was outfitted with a “walking boot” for a stress fracture in my foot. And guess what? In spite of its’ name, those boots aren’t really made for walking, or comfort either!

Fortunately, it was a temporary situation, and after one month, I was free from the “ball and chain” that I had been dragging around. But the universe does work in mysterious ways, and having that boot affixed to my left foot gave me reason to pause and actually count my blessings. I knew I’d be home free in a few weeks and my worse-case scenario was no yoga for an indefinite time. A small price to pay considering what many others encounter on a day-to-day basis.

It got me thinking, how well do you fare in the face of adversity? Do you have the proverbial pity party, or do you put on your big girl (or big boy) pants and step up to the plate? It’s often during

our darkest days that we reveal our true selves and demonstrate our perseverance when we hit rock bottom and our joyful demeanors are put to the test.

With the new year upon us, it's a great time to turn inward and evaluate what professional or personal challenges might be on our plates. To quote the late Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch in his final lecture: *"We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand."* Randy's words really resonated with me and I learned they also ring true for many of my fellow WSDaH Family members.

When interacting with my WSDaH Family members, we usually come together in good times when everyone is feeling upbeat and positive. It's hard to know the personal and professional struggles many Family members face especially those who might not wear their hearts on their sleeves as easily as some of us do. (Present company included).

Everyone likes a happy ending and listening to the journeys some of my fellow Family members have traveled has given me perspective and the utmost respect for those folks who have fought some incredible battles and have come out on the other side stronger and with gratitude.

Here's what they had to say:

"Back in November of 2016, my family got together for our annual Chanukah celebration. My mom had recently returned from one of her cruise ship vacations with a lingering cough. Erring on the side of caution, she made an appointment with her doctor.

The news could not have been worse. Stage 4 cancer which had metastasized all over her body, including her bones. My mother's reply: 'No Regrets'. 3 months later, her spirit left her body. We were (and still are) devastated that it happened so fast. You just never know.

Fast forward to March 2019. I have this horrible pain in my abdomen and drive myself to the emergency room. The MRI revealed kidney stones, small and painful but seemed to be passing. I hang for a few hours in the ER and am finally released with instructions to follow up with my doctor.

Time passes and my doctor calls to let me know that when viewing the MRI, she noted something in the bottom of my lungs that needed further evaluation so more tests followed shortly thereafter. A mass in the left upper lobe of my lung of 8mm and one in my right lower lobe of 1.8cm were detected.

I immediately thought of my mom and what had happened two years prior...

August 9th (yes the day Jerry died) I went in for a wedge resection to remove a large portion of the mass. Let me say that with all that happened to my mom and with my kids

being away in upstate NY on vacation with their mom, I was a wreck. I even wrote letters to my kids just in case.

Surgery over, doctor sees me in recovery and immediately tells me it is not cancer. It turned out to be scarring from an infection. Weeks turn into months, and as it turns out I still have the infection in my lungs that I am currently addressing today.

How did I get through all of this? I can say with words that we use all the time...LOVE. I had amazing people —Jessica, my brother Eric and Mama Bear aka Deb with me to take me to doctor appointments, tests, surgery etc... And I thought about my mom. No regrets. WOW!

Every day I am grateful and blessed to have these people in my life. And every day I think how lucky I am to have met Deb, thanks to an introduction from Rob Frohm. And now that I have met more people through our Family, I am absolutely GRATEFUL AND BLESSED to know you all. Thank you for being a part of my life!"

[Marty Weinbaum](#), Commercial Fitness Consultant, Gym Source

"This story is supposed to be about 'triumphing over professional or personal adversity'. The story has a good start, an interesting enough middle, but the end is yet to be written. In other words, I am writing about a triumph that is still to occur.

The beginning chapter happened about 7 1/2 years ago—my second child was born and I also commenced employment at Ralph Lauren. Two new family dynamics for me to grow with and learn from. The past 7 years have been a rollercoaster ride—fast and exciting, with many ups and downs along the way. I was happy with the pace and level of intensity of this ride, and loved the people who were along with me on this journey.

Fast forward to the middle of our story. This September, my professional ride came to an abrupt halt—Ralph Lauren's HR department had a reorganization and my position was eliminated. It saddened me to leave my professional family, the work that I proudly built, and the company that I grew to love. In addition to this sadness, there was an overwhelming fear and loneliness that settled in.

I really had no idea what was to come, how long it would take, who to speak to, and so on.

So I guess this is my moment of professional adversity.

But in this confusion, I 'just listen to the music play.' And this is what I am hearing:

- *'Nothing left to do but smile, smile, smile.' Be happy, as there are many years to be thankful for.*

- *'The grass ain't greener, the wine ain't sweeter, either side of the hill.'* Be optimistic, as the new role will also be green and sweet.
- *'There is a road, no simple highway, between the dawn and the dark of night.'* Be aware of the challenge ahead, as the path is unknown.
- *'Watch each card you play and play it slow.'* Be perceptive and patient, as many choices will be presented.
- *'You just gotta poke around.'* Put yourself out there, as you don't know what opportunities you will find.

With these tunes bouncing around in my head, my perspective was reframed and I was ready to ask for needed help. So I leaned into my WSDaH network. In just a short time, I received enormous support from WSDaH Family members. I have been introduced to and spoken with amazing leaders at a variety of awesome and inspirational companies. To those of you (you know who you are) that were happy to have a conversation and offer your help, you have my sincere gratitude—thank you!

Though sad, I am happy and thankful. Though daunting, I am excited by this adventure. Though alone, I have support. Perhaps this is already my triumph.

Grateful for this touch of grey and wishing everyone many silver linings."

[KC Weinraub](#), Senior Director, Total Rewards

"Long distance runner what you standing there for. The Good Ole Boys sang 'Fire on the Mountain' at one of my first shows and since that time in the late 70s, there's always been that connection, the band's been singing to me at every turn. So it actually came as no surprise that the worst news I'd ever received was delivered in August, smack on the 24th anniversary of Jerry's transition.

'Let your life proceed by its own design' took on a whole new meaning as I weaved and bobbed through countless tests and cancer screenings. At each threshold, another favorite tune would reappear to help me through the dark days. 'Recall the days that still are to come.' Several weeks post-surgery (a mere six and a half hours under the knife), my son shared with me that when I awoke in the recovery room, I sang 'Eyes of the World'. I have absolutely no recollection of that whatsoever.

As the date for the WSDaH annual event was nearing, I shared with Deb Solomon that I didn't think I'd be able to attend on my own, as I was only just getting back on my feet. In classic Deb-style, she gave me an awesome hug, then turned to my husband and said, 'You get to come and be her bodyguard!' I was thrilled; I hadn't realized just how much I really wanted to be at that party amid happy people and wonderful music. The date became something for me to focus on, the first big night out post-surgery.

Deb was right. Attending the annual event was the most nurturing welcoming way to reenter the world. The hugs and words and emotions from the regular Family family to new friends and even some old friends that I didn't know were in WSDaH ... 'I love you more than words can tell'. I am so grateful to be part of this extended family. Sure, the business aspect is great; for me this group is so much more than networking. 'If I had the world to give, I'd give it to you...'

[Elizabeth Marks](#), Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker, The Shapot Team, Compass

"After graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2018 with a degree in Advertising & Marketing Communications, I had little to no idea what I wanted to do. Less than a month after graduating, my mom ended up having emergency brain surgery. Weeks turned into months and she wasn't getting any better. I hadn't started my job-hunt because I wanted to help my mom during a stressful time. Family always comes first for me, especially when the person who took care of me for my entire life needed to be taken care of.

A couple of months before I graduated, I painted a pair of Vans sneakers for myself with a stealie, dancing bears and roses. So many people gave me such great feedback and asked if I sold them that I figured I should. I set myself up with social media and a website just over a year ago and have painted over thirty pairs of shoes and expanded into denim jackets, pick guards and stickers. I have always loved creating art but never felt like it could take me anywhere. I owe it to all of those people who urged me to start selling them in the first place. However, most of the credit goes to the freedom I had to figure out my path. I'm not known for my time management skills and a lot of time went into creating my small business. That's time I would not have had if I was working. I'm very grateful to all of the Wall Street Dead aHead Family members that have supported me. At some points over this past year, I had felt like I was getting farther from finding what I wanted to do in life until it found me. Let your life proceed by it's own design."

[Katie Sexton](#), Artist, Katie Sexton Art

Do you prefer going where the water tastes like wine like the above Family members? What tips do you have for taking the high road when faced with adversity in your personal or professional lives? We all have a story to tell and we'd love to hear yours...